

Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office  
6010 Hidden Valley Road  
Carlsbad, California 92011  
Phone: 760/431-9440  
Fax: 760/431-9624

# News Release



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Contact: Jane Hendron, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office – 760/431-9440 ext. 205

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## **CRITICAL HABITAT DESIGNATED FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POPULATION OF ENDANGERED MOUNTAIN YELLOW-LEGGED FROG**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today published a final rule designating 8,283 acres of streams in portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties as critical habitat for the Federally endangered southern California population of mountain yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*).

All of the areas designated as critical habitat lie within the boundaries of the Angeles and San Bernardino National Forests. Only about 119 acres of the designated critical habitat are on privately owned inholdings within the National Forests. Estimated costs associated with conservation activities for the species in the areas designated as critical habitat could range from \$11.4 to \$12.9 million over the next 20 years.

Areas designated as critical habitat can be divided into three major units: the San Gabriel, San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountain Units. These designated areas include portions of Bear Gulch, Vincent Gulch, and Alder Gulch along the east fork of the San Gabriel River; and portions of Little Rock Creek, Big Rock Creek, and Devil's Canyon along the West Fork of the San Gabriel River; portions of the East and West Forks of City Creek; and portions of Fuller Mill Creek, Dark Canyon, Black Mountain Creek, and the North Fork of the San Jacinto River.

Some of the areas designated as critical habitat are not currently known to contain populations of the species. These areas, including City Creek and the upper reaches of the North Fork of the Whitewater River, are included in the designation because the Service determined they contain physical and biological features essential to the conservation of the species and may be focal points for future recovery efforts.

Portions of Fuller Mill Creek, Dark Canyon, the North Fork of the San Jacinto River and Hall Canyon were excluded from critical habitat because they are already included in the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

More than 50 percent of the total impacts identified in the draft economic analysis are associated with costs related to recreational fishing. The costs of modifications to fire management practices, modifying hiking trails, and impacts to rock climbers resulting from a temporary closure of Williamson Rock in the area of Little Rock Creek account for approximately 30 and 40 percent of the total estimated impacts.

Mountain yellow-legged frogs are found in streams from southern California to high-elevation lakes in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Research conducted on the various populations of the species indicates that mountain yellow-legged frogs in southern California are distinctly different from those found in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. In 2002, the Service listed mountain yellow-legged frogs in southern California as an endangered distinct population segment of the species.

This final critical habitat designation was prepared pursuant to a court order resulting from a lawsuit filed against the Service by the Center for Biological Diversity in 2004, challenging the Service's decision not to designate critical habitat for the southern California DPS of mountain yellow-legged frog at the time it was listed under the ESA.

In 30 years of implementing the ESA, the Service has found that designation of critical habitat provides little additional protection for most listed species, while preventing the agency from using scarce conservation resources for activities with greater conservation benefits.

In almost all cases, recovery of listed species will come through voluntary cooperative partnerships, not regulatory measures such as critical habitat. Habitat is also protected through cooperative measures under the ESA, including Habitat Conservation Plans, Safe Harbor Agreements, Candidate Conservation Agreements and state programs. In addition, voluntary partnership programs such as the Service's Private Stewardship Grants and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program also restore habitat. Habitat for listed species is provided on many of the Service's National Wildlife Refuges and state wildlife management areas.

A copy of the final rule and other information about the southern California population of mountain yellow-legged frog is available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/carlsbad>, or by contacting the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office at 760-431-9440.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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